



TANGIBLE AND
INTANGIBLE
HERITAGE IN
THE AGE OF
GLOBALISATION

EDITED BY
LILIA MAKHLOUFI



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8. Western Churches in Nagasaki and Amakusa as Sites of Memory

Joanes Rocha

Introduction

Our interest in *lieux de mémoire*, those places where memory crystallizes and secretes itself, has occurred at a particular historical moment. It is a turning point where our consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that our collective memory has been ruptured—but ruptured in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists.¹

In his classic *Les lieux de mémoire* (1997), Pierre Nora defines the term ‘site of memory’ in an expansive way. His definition encompasses not only tangible heritage items, such as buildings, structures, archives and memorials, but also intangible cultural heritage which expresses a community’s identity, such as practices, representations, expressions and knowledge.² In other words, for Nora, a site of memory is a place with architectural, archaeological or cultural features deeply related to a specific memory that needs to be revisited.³

Although Nora’s study has been criticised in the field of French history for his strong desire to achieve an ultimate sense of French nationhood

1 Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, *Representations*, 26 (1989), 7–24 (p. 7).

2 *Les lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), pp. 23–43.

3 This chapter incorporates the idea of sites of memory as a conceptual tool, following Nora’s notion that sites of memory are not independent of outside events or influences.

and inflexible opposition between 'history' and 'memory', his ideas can be expanded to bring new approaches to other research fields, such as heritage studies, as demonstrated by Maurice Halbwachs⁴ and Frances Yates.⁵ In this way, the 'site of memory' conceptual approach can enable us to better understand the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage in determining local, or even national, senses of belonging.

Currently, the most prominent World Heritage Sites (WHS) recognised as Sites of Memory are linked to painful memories. Examples of these sites include the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (*Genbaku Dome*) and the former Auschwitz Concentration Camp, both of which are widely known for the horrors of war which transpired there.

Inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2018, the 'Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region' also shares a painful past that needs to be revisited,⁶ which is precisely the topic of this chapter. Moreover, since sites of memory are usually connected with sensitive issues, it is crucial to use consistent ethical approaches and appropriate methods to conserve the interpretative process and ensure that all stakeholders are heard.⁷

Thus, heritage professionals, such as historians, archaeologists, anthropologists and architects, play a significant role in evaluating and preserving those sites. Yet, the process of identifying sites of memory is often not initiated by heritage professionals but by communities, which indicates the local willingness to preserve the history and memory of these sites. Nagasaki and Amakusa are no exceptions to this.

From tangible to intangible heritage

Yamanaka Hiroshi states that the process for the recognition of Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region as a World Heritage Site

4 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago; London: Chicago University Press, 1992).

5 Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999).

6 Fukami Satoshi and Sim Ji-Hyun, 'World Heritage and Dark Tourism: A Case Study of "Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region Japan', *Academia Journal of Environmental Science*, 6 (2018), 11–19.

7 UNESCO World Heritage Centre, *Managing Cultural World Heritage and Managing Natural World Heritage* (Whc.unesco.org, 2013), <https://whc.unesco.org/en/managing-cultural-world-heritage>

started in 2001, when a group of volunteers called the Association for Declaring the Nagasaki Church Group a World Heritage Site sought to protect Catholic churches located in Nagasaki's remote villages on the Kyūshū Islands of the Japanese Archipelago.⁸ Initially, the Japanese government was reluctant to agree. However, following the inclusion of several Nagasaki churches and Christian sites on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Tentative List in 2007, the government shifted its stance and began making efforts to promptly recognise these places as World Heritage Sites. This included supporting the Nagasaki World Heritage Scholarly Committee project, along with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Japan and Nagasaki Prefecture.

During the conferences to decide the scope of the nomination, fourteen historic sites were listed, and, in 2015, a proposal entitled *Churches and Christian Sites in Nagasaki* was presented to the World Heritage Committee. However, in 2016, an interim report prepared jointly by UNESCO and ICOMOS clarified that the submission would not be successfully approved as it was presented.

The Japanese government withdrew the proposal during the ICOMOS Evaluation Process in 2016, and three months later, at the government's invitation, an ICOMOS advisory mission helped local authorities in the drafting of a new proposal.⁹ In the end, the advisory mission maintained the advisory panel's suggestions.

Among the proposed changes, the most significant was changing the nomination from tangible to intangible heritage. As the title indicates, the *Churches and Christian Sites in Nagasaki* focused on the local churches, the earliest of which was built in 1864; however, in response to UNESCO and ICOMOS suggestions, it later incorporated several anthropological, ethnographic and intangible characteristics of the Hidden Christian communities, which had covertly preserved their religious beliefs during persecutions that lasted for at least 250 years.

Thus, in 2017, Japan submitted a new proposal entitled *Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region* with the following explanation:

8 Yamanaka Hiroshi, 'Nagasaki Katorikku kyōkai-gun to tsūrizumu', *Studies in Philosophy*, 33 (2007), 155–176.

9 UNESCO World Heritage Center, *Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region* (Whc.unesco.org, n.d.), <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1495/>

The nominated property bears unique testimony to the history of people and their communities who secretly transmitted their faith in Christianity during the time of prohibition spanning more than two centuries in Japan, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.¹⁰ [...] Hidden Christians gave rise to a distinctive religious tradition that was seemingly vernacular, yet which maintained the essence of Christianity, and they survived continuing their faith over the ensuing two centuries.¹¹

We must emphasise that this shift from tangible heritage (churches) to intangible heritage (Hidden Christian traditions and cultural landscape) influenced not only the proposal for recognition as a World Heritage Site, but also the Japanese Catholic community's perception of its past. Moreover, the history of Christianity in Japan had to be rewritten due to this change.

The first proposal focused on the churches meant to be inscribed under Criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv) of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).¹² However, at the end of the nomination process, the Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki region were recognised solely under Criterion (iii): 'to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared'.¹³

The official description of the *Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region* explicitly states that the principal subjects are the *Senpuku kirishitan* communities, which encompass Japanese Christians persecuted under the Tokugawa shogunate from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Yet, because Criterion (iii) mentions both 'living or disappeared' cultures, some visitors, and even professionals, are confused about how much of the nomination is about the 'disappeared' *Senpuku kirishitan*

10 Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA), *Main Document: Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region* (Tōkyō: ACA, 2017a), p. 209.

11 Ibid., p. 241.

12 *Criteria (ii)* 'To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.'
Criteria (iv) 'to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.' UNESCO, *Criteria for Selection, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Whc.unesco.org, 2021), <https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>

13 Ibid.

and how much of it is about their 'living' descendants that maintain their tradition, today called *Kakure kirishitan*.

Things become even more complicated in languages other than Japanese, such as English, as the word 'hidden' often represents both *Senpuku* and *Kakure*, complicating the recognition of the target group. Consequently, we must take a brief look at the history of Christianity in Japan to better grasp which elements are 'remembered', why these churches can be identified as sites of memory and their contributions to bringing together tangible and intangible heritage perspectives.

Revisiting the past

The first encounter between Japan and Europe occurred in September 1543, with the arrival of two Portuguese merchants on a Chinese vessel in Tanegashima.¹⁴ However, the Catholic Church's missionary work only began in 1549 when the Jesuit Francis Xavier arrived in Kagoshima.¹⁵

Christianity soon began to spread among the local lords. Some later converted to Catholicism and became prominent supporters of missionaries in Japan, providing financial and political aid to build churches and seminaries, arguably to profit from overseeing trade.¹⁶ Meanwhile, many plebeians converted to Christianity because of missionaries' efforts or demands from these Christian lords, also known as *Kirishitan daimyō* (from the Portuguese word *cristão*).¹⁷

However, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries witnessed a series of anti-Christianity edicts. In 1587, Toyotomi Hideyoshi was the first to issue an edict against the practice of Christianity. He went on to banish Catholic missionaries from specific areas in Japan and

14 Olof G. Lidin, *Tanegashima: The Arrival of Europe in Japan* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2004), p. 3.

15 Thomas Worcester, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Jurgis Elisonas (George Elison), 'Christianity and the daimyō', in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, IV Early Modern Japan, ed. by John W. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 368–372.

16 Miki Seiichirō, *Teppō to sono jidai* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2012), pp. 25–28.

17 Some famous *Kirishitan daimyō* were Amakusa Hisatane, Hasekura Tsunenaga, Ōmura Sumitada (Dom Bartolomeu), Arima Harunobu (Don Protasio), Takayama Ukon (Takayama Justus) e Ōtomo Yoshishige (Ōtomo Sōrin or Don Francisco, also named King of Bungo).

consolidate his rule over the Kyūshū region that served as the gateway to the Lusitanian trade of Japanese silver and Chinese silk via Macao.

After the death of Hideyoshi, Tokugawa Ieyasu gained military control over the region. At first, Tokugawa was willing to establish commercial relationships with Portugal and Spain through the Philippines. However, in 1614, the Tokugawa shogunate enacted laws that banned the practice of Christianity, leading to the prosecution of Christian followers, the demolition of churches and the deportation of missionaries and Christians.

In the years to come, especially under the reigns of Tokugawa Hidetada and Tokugawa Iemitsu, the oppression of Christianity was further intensified by two specific policies:

1. *Sakoku* (Japanese for 'closed country'), the isolationist foreign policy under which relations and trade between Japan and other countries were limited;¹⁸ and
2. Finding and punishing Japanese nationals who were followers of Christianity and forcing Christian communities to register in a Buddhist temple (*shumon aratamecho*). Furthermore, the Japanese government used *fumi-e* (Japanese for 'stepping on a picture') to reveal Catholics and Catholic sympathisers. In brief, those who were suspected of being Christian were forced to step on the images of the Virgin Mary and Jesus.¹⁹

After the martyrdom of the last missionary, Mancio Konishi, in 1644, the remaining Japanese followers of Christianity had to practice their religious ceremonies in secret. Scholars of Japanese history state that, in addition to seventy-five missionaries who were executed publicly, more than a thousand faced death during the intense persecution between 1617 and 1644.

The prohibition of the Christian faith and other oppressive measures taken by the Japanese authorities forced the remaining Christians into

18 Nearly all foreign nationals were prohibited from entering Japan, with the exception of a few Chinese traders and the Dutch trading post in Dejima, Nagasaki.

19 These events provided the background for Shūsaku Endō's novel *Chinmoku* (Silence, 1966), which was later adapted into movies directed by Masahiro Shinoda (1971) and Martin Scorsese (2016).

hiding, which led to the coinage of the term *Senpuku kirishitan* (translated in this chapter as Hidden Christians following the document *Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region*).

To conceal themselves and maintain their Christian faith, these communities had to join temples and shrines to hide their religious affiliation. For example, in the villages on Kuroshima Island, communities secretly worshipped a Buddhist statue as if it was a statue of the Virgin Mary (Maria Kannon). In Sakitsu Village in Amakusa, they used statues of the traditional Japanese divine beings Daikokuten and Ebisu—which are considered two of the Seven Gods of Fortune (*Shichifukujin*)—and worshipped them as Christian *Deusu* (the Japanese pronunciation of the Portuguese word *Deus*, meaning God in English).

Those living in the villages of Shitsu and Ono, located in Sotome, used to sing prayers called *orasho* (derived from the Latin word *oratio*) consisting of Japanese, Latin and Portuguese verses; today, this is considered one of the most remarkable features of the oral tradition of Hidden Christianity among the living descendants.

It is important to stress that even before the ban on Christianity was imposed in the late sixteenth century, the Catholic communities in Japan had already established *confrarias* (the Portuguese word for ‘brotherhoods’; translated as *kumi* in Japanese) in different regions under the guidance of the Jesuits. During the Tokugawa shogunate, however, only in the Nagasaki and Amakusa regions could these *confrarias* survive. According to scholars such as Kentarō Miyazaki,²⁰ Roger Munsi,²¹ Gonoï Takashi²² and Stephen Turnbull,²³ this can be explained in terms of several unique factors, which include:

- The solidity of the religious group (*confrarias*) in the Kyūshū region before the prohibition, as this region was the centre of the trade with Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries;

20 Kentarō Miyazaki, *Kakure Kirishitan: Orasho Tamashii no Tsusoteion* (Nagasaki: Nagasaki Shinbunsha, 2001); Kentarō Miyazaki, *Kakure Kirishitan no jitsuzo: Nihonjin no kirisuto kyorikai to juyō* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2014).

21 Roger Vanzila Munsi, ‘Kakure Kirishitan in Urban Contexts: An Ethnographic Analysis of the Survival Strategies’, *The Japan Mission Journal*, 68:1 (2014), 39–57.

22 Gonoï Takashi, *Nihon Kirisutokyo-shi* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1990).

23 Stephen Turnbull, *The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan: A Study of Their Development, Beliefs and Rituals to the Present Day* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

- The persistent efforts of local religious leaders of those religious groups, such as *mizukata* and *chōkata*, who performed Christian rituals and helped others learn about the catechism during the ban on Christianity from late sixteenth century until 1873;²⁴
- Cooperation with Buddhist and Shintoist communities;
- Local authorities turned a blind eye to the activities of Hidden Christians as long they did not cause any problems.

Japan's tensions with the outside world became domestic issues in the late eighteenth century. Thus, the Tokugawa shogunate decided to reopen several docks to Western countries in 1854, including the Nagasaki port.²⁵ The missionaries from the *Société des Missions étrangères de Paris* (Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, MEP) undertook to build churches to observe Sunday Mass once they arrived in Japan. One of these churches was the *Ōura Tenshudō*, or Ōura Cathedral, which gained popularity as the stage for the so-called *Shinto hakken*, when a Japanese group from Urakami Village visited Father Petitjean in 1865 and confessed their faith by saying, 'We are of one heart with you'.²⁶

Although the French missionaries of the nineteenth century were aware of the Portuguese and Spanish missionaries' work during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they were astounded to come across Christian communities after two and a half centuries of isolation. Nevertheless, soon after the *Shinto hakken*, other secret Christian groups began to seek help from missionaries both within and outside Japan.²⁷

24 The person who carried out baptisms in the absence of missionaries was called a *mizukata*, literally the 'person with water'. The person responsible for keeping the liturgical calendar was called a *chōkata*, literally the 'person with the notebook'. During the ban on Christianity, these *chōkata* used a copied calendar from 1634, the last calendar compiled by a missionary they had access. Usually, it was a patriarchal lineage, but it was constated that in Nokubi Village, women rather than men served as leaders of the Hidden Christian communities because male householders had to take part in the Okinokojima Shrine rituals (ACA, *Main Document: Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region*, p. 124).

25 As mentioned above, Nagasaki was one of the few places open for foreign trade during the Edo seclusion.

26 Francisque Marnas, *Nihon Kirisutokyō fukkatsushi* (Tōkyō: Misuzu Shobo, 1985).

27 Martin Nogueira Ramos, *La foi des ancêtres. Chrétiens cachés et catholiques dans la société villageoise japonaise* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2019).

Despite the decision to gradually open Japan to the outside world and allow foreigners to perform their religious duties, the Tokugawa shogunate still took severe measures against the native Japanese Christians. Hidden Christians in the Nagasaki village of Urakami Village were arrested in 1867 during the fourth persecution of Urakami Christians (*Urakami yoban kuzure*).

Moreover, the Meiji government continued to implement the policy of systemic oppression from the 1860s. This government exiled more than 3,000 Christians to other regions and tortured many others, in an effort to force them to convert. Harassment of Christians continued until 1873 when the prohibition on Christianity was lifted, and new churches were erected by those who reconciled with the Holy See. Those are the Churches listed in the first proposal entitled *Churches and Christian Sites in Nagasaki*.

Interpreting sites of memory: Churches in Nagasaki and Amakusa as a case study

The Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki and Amakusa regions is a serial nomination with twelve components—eleven sites and one monument—that bear witness to the traditions of the Hidden Christian communities. Some of these sites date back to the sixteenth century, when the first contact with European missionaries occurred. Hirado Island, where Francis Xavier taught Catholicism in 1550, and Shitsu and Ono villages,²⁸ where Jesuit missionaries introduced Catholicism in 1571, host the most ancient of these Hidden Christian communities.

Isolation from the Vatican for more than 250 years resulted in a unique blend of Christian rituals with Buddhist and Shinto customs among Hidden Christians. Thus, following Japan's reopening, this new contact with the Holy See led to uncertainty among Christian communities about their Christian identity and raised the missionaries' concerns about the legitimacy of the baptisms carried out by the *Senpuku kirishitan* in their absence.

The communities ended up splitting into different groups: Some accepted reconciliation with the Vatican (called *katorikku* in Japanese),

28 In 1571, Ono Village was under a *Kirishitan daimyō* as part of the Ōmura Domain.

some renounced Christianity and self-declared as Buddhists and/or Shintoists, some continued their religious practices (today called *Kakure kirishitan*) and some declined to be affiliated with any religion.

According to Keir Reeves, '[S]uch sites of memory are important to historians because they represent the enduring physical places where the past is remembered, commemorated, and constructed in the present day'.²⁹ This phenomenon can also be observed among churches erected in places associated with historical events by those who reconciled with the Holy See in the 1880s,³⁰ such as the former and current churches in Sakitsu, Amakusa.

According to the UNESCO website and documentation,³¹ the nomination is called in English 'Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region', clearly focusing on the Nagasaki prefecture. However, official documents and literature written in the Japanese language reveal another name, 'Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki and Amakusa Regions'³², as the nomination also includes Sakitsu village in Amakusa, the present Kumamoto prefecture.

Therefore, since Nagasaki's heritage sites—both city and prefecture—are relatively well known, I shall redirect our attention to the equally fascinating fishing village of Sakitsu, which was selected as an Important Cultural Landscape by the Japanese government in 2012.³³

The first Christian communities in Amakusa were established in 1569 due to Jesuit Luis de Almeida's missionary work. During the ban, as previously mentioned, they had to be officially registered in a Buddhist temple. Simultaneously, they were outwardly affiliated with the Sakitsu Suwa Shrine and behaved like Shinto practitioners to camouflage their

29 Keir Reeves, 'Sites of Memory', in *History, Memory and Public Life: The Past in the Present*, ed. by Anna Maerker, Simon Sleight, Adam Sutcliffe (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 65–79 (p. 65).

30 ACA, *Main Document: Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region*, p. 149.

31 UNESCO, *Hidden Christian Sites*.

32 長崎と天草地方の潜伏キリシタン関連遺産 (*Nagasaki to Amakusa-chihō no senpuku kirishitan kanren'isan*).

33 The first designation as Important Cultural Landscape was on 7 February 2011 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan, MEXT, official notice no. 22). However, with some additions in the following year, it became the current 'Cultural Landscape of Sakitsu and Imatomi in Amakusa' on 19 September 2012 (MEXT, official notice no. 158).

Catholic faith.³⁴ In the fishing village of Sakitsu, 'the local community found its way to venerate Christian symbols using the shells of abalone and fan-mussel clams with their mother-of-pearl patterns to the image of the Virgin Mary, and also making medals from shells of the white-lipped pearl oyster'.³⁵

The first Sakitsu Church was built in 1888 at a site offered by a Catholic who had served as a *mizukata* during the ban on Christianity. This site was also adjacent to the Sakitsu Suwa Shrine, where *oratio* prayers were performed secretly during the prohibition. However, the Church's location was changed in 1934 due to the ageing of the structure.³⁶ The new and present location of the Church was once the dwelling of the former village headmen from the Yoshida family, where the Hidden Christians were forced to step on Christian images.

Not only in Sakitsu but also across Kyūshū, the new churches reveal the local desire to reconnect with the Roman Curia without losing their community identity. Several churches were built in the neo-Gothic style using Western-style materials and methods. For example, the Ono Church was built with bricks and stones, and the Kuroshima Church has porcelain around the altar. The effects of European architecture on the churches built in distant regions of Japan testify to the local Catholic community's desire to have a 'Western Catholic church', such as those designed by Tetsukawa Yosuke (1879–1976).³⁷

However, local elements that call to mind the period of persecution can still be found in these structures. Instead of the European floral ornaments commonly seen in Catholic churches and graveyards,³⁸ the

34 When some villagers were exposed as Hidden Christians during the *Amakusa Kuzure*, or crackdown, in 1805, they were required to hand over their devotional items to the Sakitsu Suwa Shrine. However, no further persecution occurred.

35 ACA, *Main Document: Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region*, p. 78.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 78–79.

37 Tetsukawa was a local Japanese architect from Kamigoto who learned Western-style architecture from Father de Rotz and Father Pelu and became famous for his church's architectural designs. Although Yosuke's family specialised in building Buddhist Temples and Shinto Shires, and even if he was a Buddhist himself, he reflected the Catholic aesthetic sense in all the churches he designed (Katsuhiko Kimura, *Nagasaki ni okeru Katorikku kyōkai junrei to tsūrizumu* [Pilgrimage to Roman Catholic Churches and Tourism in Nagasaki], *Nagasaki kokusaidagaku ronsō*, 7 (2007), 123–133).

38 Concerning the Hidden Christian graveyards, they were identical to Buddhist graveyards in their outward appearance, however the bodies interred there were positioned in a distinctive manner. While Buddhists laid the bodies of the deceased

Japanese camellia (native to the island of Gotō) was carved on the churches as a symbol of the Virgin Mary, keeping a tradition that had started among the *Senpuku kirishitan* during the ban.

As we saw at the opening of this chapter, Pierre Nora defines the term ‘site of memory’ as a place encompassing tangible and intangible heritage that expresses a community’s identity. Thus, the local Japanese community chose to build in the neo-Gothic style while preserving local symbolisms, such as the Japanese camellia. Moreover, when the second Church was erected at the same dwelling where the Hidden Christians used to be forced to step on Christian images, the local catholic communities were reinterpreting the space.

In sum, they were transforming those spaces from places of sorrow into sites of memory with a strong message of resilience and hope and giving those locations a new significance, as they are now freely praying in the same places where their ancestors were tormented because of their faith.

Now we turn from Amakusa to the city of Nagasaki, the Japanese gate to the outside world for the past five centuries. During a field study in 2018—just a few months after the World Heritage Site designation—flags and messages of congratulations could be observed everywhere around the city, most of which were placed by the Nagasaki prefecture and secretary of tourism. However, going deeper into the city, there were also fascinating handwritten posters praising the designation, presumably made by citizens.

Nowadays, several public places, such as museums and churches, host artefacts imported to Japan in the mid-seventeenth century or produced by the Hidden Christians during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, many others are still preserved by the

in the coffin in a sitting position (*zakan*), Hidden Christians bent the knees of the deceased, laying their bodies on the side, with their heads toward the south (ACA, *Main Document: Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region*, p. 88. Also vide, Bebio Vieira Amaro, *Minato-shi Nagasaki ni okeru kirishitan shisetsu ni kansuru kenkyū*, PhD thesis, Graduate School of Engineering, University of Tokyo (2016), pp. 101–102; and Carla Tronu, ‘Jesuit Accommodation Method in 16th & 17th Century Japan’, in *Los Jesuitas, religión, política y educación (s.XVI-XVIII)*, ed. by José Martínez Millán et al. (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2012), pp. 1617–1642.

Kakure kirishitan communities in their houses or private collections. Some are still used for familiar ceremonies—and along with oral history—and these artefacts represent the Hidden Christians' customs, practices and traditions, giving us insight into the *Senpuku kirishitan's* cultural heritage.

In anticipation of international visitors after becoming a World Heritage Site, the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA)—the principal agency for preserving Japanese culture—started training local volunteers as guides, and established museums, souvenir shops, restrooms and similar facilities in selected churches.

The local volunteers, including Catholics and non-Catholics, are given responsibilities, such as managing the number of visitors and providing them with information about the churches and historical sites.³⁹ This strategy aims to moderate the effect of tourism on the local lifestyle, as the houses of *Kakure kirishitan* must be considered private spaces.

Although this study has focused on the Catholic churches, the fascinating *Kakure kirishitan* communities should not be undervalued. They are significant for our understanding of home-grown history and are engaged in preserving local traditions. It is vital to remember that sites of memory require extensive research on tangible and intangible heritage features to ensure that different stakeholders and narratives are heard, including *Kakure kirishitan* communities. Thus, according to the ACA, those communities are expected to benefit from sustainable tourism and pilgrimage around the churches, which can generate profits without interfering with religious rituals.⁴⁰

Despite this, a report prepared by the Nagasaki prefecture emphasises that younger people are migrating to bigger cities searching for academic and professional opportunities, causing the interruption

39 Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA), *Supplementary Material on the Nomination of Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region* (Japan: ACA, 2017b); International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), *Preparing World Heritage Nominations*, 2nd ed. (Paris: UNESCO World, 2011).

40 Today, the most important legislation concerning heritage in Japan is the 'Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties' (enacted in 1950 and revisited in 2004). However, it is also a necessary survey on the Ancient Shrines and Temples Preservation Law (1897); Law for the Preservation of Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments (1919); National Treasures Preservation Law (1929), and Natural Parks Act (1957).

and extinction of traditional practices and rituals among both *Kakure kirishitan* and reunified Catholics.⁴¹

In order to prevent this extinction, the Nagasaki and Amakusa prefectures, with the support of the Japanese national government and international communities, are not only creating new job opportunities through sustainable tourism, but also incorporating educational programmes that can help reaffirm a sense of identity among young people. As Sara McDowell argues, 'without memory, a sense of self, identity, culture, and heritage is lost'.⁴²

Conclusion

The author had the opportunity to visit Nagasaki and Amakusa several times before and after the nomination, and what that field research revealed can be expressed in the words of Michael Rothberg, a scholar of memory studies, who said, 'Sites of memory do not remember by themselves; they require the active agency of individuals and publics.'⁴³

Thus, using the churches in Nagasaki and Amakusa as a case study—particularly those in Amakusa, which are commonly forgotten by Western scholars—and using relevant sources written in Japanese and Western languages, this chapter calls attention to the fact that even if the churches lost their primacy when the project shifted from tangible heritage (churches) to intangible heritage (the Hidden Christian traditions) in 2017, these churches are still playing a vital role in the local heritage preservation strategy, as this change influenced not only the necessary documentation for recognition as a World Heritage Site but also reformed the Japanese Catholic community's perception of its past.

This can be observed via the architectural features of the modern churches—erected from the 1880s—comprising Japanese regional and Western symbols, such as the Japanese camellia (native to the island of

41 See Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA), *Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan. Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region* (Japan: ACA, 2017c).

42 Sara McDowell, 'Heritage, Memory and Identity', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, ed. by Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 42.

43 Michael Rothberg, 'Introduction: Between Memory and Memory', *Yale French Studies*, 118 (2010), p. 8.

Gotō), used instead of European neo-gothic floral ornaments commonly seen in Catholic churches and graveyards at the time. The Japanese camellia was carved on the churches as a symbol of the Virgin Mary, keeping a tradition that had started among the *Senpuku kirishitan* during the persecution (1614–1873); they evince the local people’s desire to reconnect with the Holy See without losing their Japanese identity. Historical churches now welcome current Japanese Catholics who now pray in the same places where their ancestors were martyred. In sum, this chapter has described how such history strengthens a sense of identity rooted in both tangible and intangible heritage, as befitting a site of memory.

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